

St. Croix Riverway

St. Croix National Scenic Riverway
Wisconsin/Minnesota

National Park Service
U.S. Department of the Interior

Official Map & Guide



Free flowing and unpolluted, the Namekagon and St. Croix rivers flow through some of the most scenic and least developed country in the Upper Midwest. Today 252 miles of these rivers are preserved as part of the National Wild and Scenic Rivers System. The St. Croix National Scenic Riverway, which includes the Namekagon, was established in 1968 as one of the original eight rivers under the National Wild and Scenic Rivers Act. The Lower St. Croix National Scenic Riverway was added to the system in 1972. Together they form a Riverway that offers outdoor enthusiasts a chance to enjoy a wilderness-like experience and a variety of outdoor recreation opportunities within easy reach of a major metropolitan area. On the upper St. Croix and Namekagon rivers

Upper St. Croix and Namekagon

The upper St. Croix and Namekagon part of the Riverway offers varied canoe environments on 200 miles of rivers. The Namekagon River begins at Namekagon Dam. It lies entirely in Wisconsin, flowing 98 miles south and west to join the St. Croix River above Danbury. The Namekagon begins as a narrow trout stream closed in by forest and meanders through a wide valley for much of its length. It occasionally widens into marshy or swamp-like areas that are popular for watching waterfowl. The lower Namekagon passes through an area of high sandy banks with many sharp bends. This stretch, with very little development visible from the river, offers canoeists a wilderness-like experience. At four areas, dams form lake-like stretches called flowages. You can end canoe trips above these flowages to avoid the slack water, or you can start below the dams to avoid having to portage.

The St. Croix Riverway starts at a dam near Gordon, Wis. The river flows southerly for 102 miles to the dam at St. Croix Falls, Wis. It lies in Wisconsin for its first 25 miles and then becomes the border river between Minnesota and Wisconsin until it flows into the Mississippi River. The St. Croix begins as a small spring. It is narrow and shallow until joined by its major tributary, the Namekagon, 20 miles downstream. It then becomes wider, deeper, and slower. For most of its length it flows through a wide valley with low banks, formed by the glacial activity that shaped both rivers' watersheds. The St. Croix passes two Minnesota state parks that provide developed camping areas. (The Namekagon and upper St. Croix offer primitive sites.) The upper Riverway's last 10 miles are the Indianhead Flowage created by the 60-foot-high St. Croix Falls hydroelectric dam. Most canoeists take out upstream of the

flowage to avoid the slack water. Small powerboat activities such as water skiing and deeper-water fishing take place on this flowage.

Many low- and medium-hazard rapids and a few high-hazard rapids exist on the St. Croix and Namekagon rivers, but they are not considered whitewater rivers. Recreation here includes fishing, hunting, inner tubing, picnicking, and canoeing, with small powerboating on the flowages. Most camping is at canoe-access primitive sites. Recreational vehicle camping areas can be found in the state parks or private campgrounds near the Riverway.

Lower St. Croix

The Lower St. Croix National Scenic Riverway covers a narrow river-and-shoreline corridor for 52 miles from St. Croix Falls dam to Prescott, Wis., where the river joins the Mississippi. The lower St. Croix is wider, deeper, and slower than the upper, its flow controlled by the hydroelectric dam at its upstream end. Downstream of the dam are the high cliffs of the Dalles, which were formed as meltwaters from retreating glaciers cut a deep, vertical-walled gorge through the bedrock. For about two miles here the St. Croix, 70 to 100 feet deep in places, flows its fastest. The Dalles mostly lie within two interstate state parks. Both offer short hiking trails to geologic features, developed campgrounds, picnic areas, swimming beaches, and boat launch ramps. On the Minnesota side you can rent a canoe or take a boat tour to see the scenic Dalles from the best vantage point, right on the water.

As it leaves the Dalles, the river becomes wider and shallower and passes between high banks for the next 20 miles. Although development is visible from the water for 15 miles of this stretch, it is popular with canoeists. Shallower water, lack of rapids, and the absence of large powerboat waves make it suitable for beginning canoeists.

About 22 miles below the dam the Apple River flows into the St. Croix, creating a large sandbar. Near here the river becomes deeper and slower-moving. Here, large powerboating becomes the major use. Twenty-seven miles downstream the valley widens still more, and, for the last 25 miles of Riverway, the river is known as Lake St. Croix. Here you enter the area administered by the states of Minnesota and Wisconsin. From near Stillwater, Minn., the Riverway's largest

city, south to Afton, Minn., shoreline development is more visible, and the area is classified recreational. Near Hudson, Wis., south of Stillwater, the river reaches its greatest width, 7,400 feet, and powerboating predominates. Farther south the river passes two state parks, one on either side.

Recreation on the lower St. Croix includes canoeing, fishing, powerboating, sailboating, and water skiing. Tour boat rides are offered at the Interstate State Park near Taylors Falls, Minn., and at Stillwater. State parks offer developed campgrounds, picnic areas, swimming beaches, and hiking trails. Limited primitive campsites are found on islands and at various points along the shoreline. Special water-use regulations apply on the lower Riverway.

Past Ways of Life



Dakota and Chippewa Indians lived in this river-and-valley country for centuries before Europeans came. The country was rich in game, fish, wild rice, and other plant foods. It was also rich in beaver, and the Chippewa allied themselves with the first French

trappers and traders. With French-supplied guns, the Chippewa eventually drove the Dakota Sioux onto the plains of southern Minnesota.



Chippewa are shown with traditional canoe (left) and wigwam (above).



After beaver supplies declined and European markets went soft, the next big industry on the St. Croix was logging. Rivers here were once choked with logs. Spillways that canoeists now portage around once regulated the water for log drives. Dams were

constructed to build a head of water to float the logs over falls and through narrows to the downriver mills. A logjam in the narrow Dalles area in 1883 lasted 57 days. Loggers broke it up with dynamite. Log drivers are shown above on the Bronson and Folsom

Company log landing at Stillwater in 1904. What had seemed like endless forests created a booming economy for a time, but the last log drive went down the St. Croix in 1914.



St. Croix Mills, owned by Isaac Staples, is shown here about 1880. The Staples residence sits on the hill.



Steamers plied the river for commercial purposes. Here the steamer Cleon puts in at Taylors Falls beside a barge full of rocks for building piers for the "Cedar Bend" railroad bridge. Captain Oscar Knapp built the Cleon in 1879.

The Life of the River



Quiet pools, rapids, swamps, and lakes—the Riverway has many moods. The wild creatures you may discover change as the Riverway's habitats change. The mix of mostly recent-growth forests along the banks—pines, brush, and hardwoods—attracts deer.

Marshes are the favorite haunts of waterfowl, so watch there for wood ducks, mallards, or great blue herons. Songbirds and small mammals abound throughout the Riverway.



With some luck you may see an osprey winging overhead. It is probably patrolling the river for fish, which it captures in its strong talons. The osprey is so large you might mistake it for a bald eagle—unless you see the birds together. The eagle is much larger.



For many folks the Riverway is synonymous with fishing and canoe camping. Indeed it is a quiet, natural haven providing a relaxing change of pace, but the Riverway also offers a variety of water and outdoor recreation opportunities along its length. For

canoeists many types of trips are possible, from a leisurely afternoon excursion to that week-long expedition.



Bass (above), muskellunge, and walleye pike are caught in the St. Croix, and the Namekagon is noted for its trout. Fishing is popular along the Riverway partly because so many different species lurk in the waters. There is competi-

tion from other anglers and from various fishing birds and otters. While quietly fishing you may also see other small aquatic mammals such as muskrats, beavers, or muskrats. More elusive are the red and the gray foxes, black bears, and coyotes.

You may be startled by the sudden burst of beating wings if you should flush an upland bird such as a ruffed grouse, wild turkey, or woodcock.



The upper part of the Riverway is canoe water, but the lower is pleasure boat water. You may see powerboats large and small, sailboats, and even houseboats. Some of the powerboats will be towing water-skiers. Houseboats reflect the river's

easy-living pace, a pace that is wonderfully slow where the river widens out as Lake St. Croix.

Facilities, Safety Tips, and Regulations

Boaters and Canoeists All watercraft must be equipped with a USCG-approved lifesaving device for each person on board. Children under age 13 must wear a properly fitted lifejacket if vessels are moving; vessels include canoes, kayaks, and innertubes. Non-swimmers should always wear them; everyone should in high-water conditions or when running rapids. Don't overload your craft. If you capsize in fast water, stay upstream from your canoe. Don't get caught between a swamped canoe and a rock or log! Boaters: watch your wake near canoes and your prop near swimmers.

Swimmers and Inner-tube Floaters Do not swim alone, at night, or in any unfamiliar place. Jumping or diving from bridges is unlawful, and swimming between Highway Bridge 8 and the public boat launch at Wisconsin Interstate Park is prohibited. Entering the river from shore in Minnesota Interstate Park to swim is prohibited. Watch small children closely near water. There

are no lifeguards and no supervised beaches on the Riverway. Floaters: Wear a lifesaving device, float with others, and navigate rapids feet first.

Hikers Use caution at the Riverway's high cliffs, and watch your footing near cliff edges. Parents: Watch children closely near cliffs.

Fishing A fishing license is required on the Riverway; state regulations apply. On the Namekagon and the first 25 miles of the St. Croix, a Wisconsin license is required. Where the St. Croix River is the boundary between Minnesota and Wisconsin, a license from either of the states is valid. State conservation officers and park rangers enforce regulations.

Fires and Firewood Firewood is scarce near campsites, and cutting trees or brush is prohibited. Collecting firewood on islands is prohibited. Build fires only in fire rings provided at campsites and keep them small. Never leave a fire

unattended—extinguish it completely before you leave the area.

Camping and Campsites There are many primitive shoreline campsites on the Riverway. Camping upriver from the hydroelectric dam on the St. Croix River and on the entire Namekagon River is restricted to designated sites and limited to a three-night stay. Within camping zones that exist south of the hydroelectric dam, length of stay is limited to seven nights. Carry out all trash. Glass beverage containers are prohibited on lands and waters within the Riverway.

Accommodations and Supplies Accommodations and supplies are available in nearby communities. Commercial canoe, kayak, and innertube outfitters and fishing guide services are located along the Riverway.

Facilities The St. Croix Visitor Center and the Riverway headquarters, located in St. Croix Falls,

Wis., are open year round. The Namekagon Visitor Center at Trego, Wis., is open in summer. The Marshland Center near Grantsburg, Wis., is open for group programs by reservation. The Riverway has several picnic areas, the two largest are in Earl Park on the Namekagon near Trego and at Osceola Landing near Osceola, Wis., on the lower St. Croix.

Fees There are no fees for use of the federally owned land or facilities. The state parks charge entrance and camp fees. Daily and annual permits are available for the state parks.

Private Property Some properties along the rivers remain in private ownership. Respect the rights of landowners; do not disturb them.

Cultural and Natural Features It is illegal to disturb any natural features, such as rock formations, or any cultural or archeological features, such as Indian burial mounds or remnants of

historic structures. Gathering of fruits, nuts, or plants for commercial purposes is prohibited.

Special Water Use Regulations Boaters note: There are special "Slow Speed" and "Slow—No Wake" zones on the lower 52 miles of the St. Croix River. Personal watercraft, or jetskis, are prohibited north of Stillwater, Minn. A checkpoint at mile 28.5, the Soo Line High Bridge, prohibits upstream travel, to control the spread of zebra mussels. In some zones water skiing is prohibited after noon on weekends and holidays from Memorial Day weekend to Labor Day weekend. Complete regulations are available at marinas and state parks or from the water patrol people. Regulations are posted on the bulletin boards at lower Riverway access points.

Lyme Disease Deer ticks are prevalent along the Riverway and can carry Lyme disease. Humans are infected via the bite of deer ticks. All visitors—but especially hikers and campers—

check yourself carefully for ticks daily. Take precautions and know the symptoms that indicate an infection.

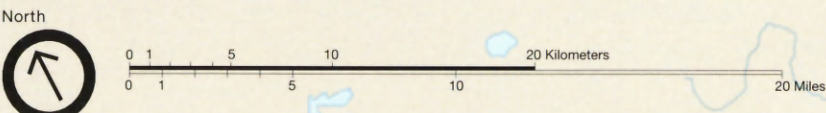
For More Information The National Park Service manages 227 miles of the Riverway, which is one of more than 380 parks in the National Park System.

St. Croix National Scenic Riverway
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St. Croix Riverway

The St. Croix National Scenic Riverway is made up of the St. Croix and Namekagon rivers and the riparian setting through which they flow. Overall administration lies with the National Park Service, U.S. Department of the Interior. The lower St. Croix River below Stillwater, Minnesota, is administered by the Minnesota and Wisconsin departments of natural resources as are five state parks, three state forests, and two wildlife refuges within the Federal zone. Douglas, Burnett, and Washburn counties administer forest lands along the upper St. Croix and Namekagon rivers. Near Namekagon Lake, the river flows through the Chequamegon National Forest, and near the mouth of the Yellow River the St. Croix flows by a portion of the reservation owned by the St. Croix Band of Chippewa.



St. Croix National Scenic Riverway

Rapids

- Ranger station
- Boat and canoe launch
- Canoe launch
- Public telephone
- Picnic area

Developed campground

Automobile oriented camping. Campgrounds usually include restrooms, picnic tables, and fire rings. Some campgrounds include hookups and showers.

Primitive shoreline campsite

Sites include primitive toilet, fire ring, and picnic table.

There are hundreds of primitive shoreline campsites on the St. Croix and Namekagon rivers. Only campsites at landings are indicated on this map. Refer to the Riverway series of section maps that are downloadable from www.nps.gov/sacn for locations of all shoreline campsites.

